

REMARKS

Claims 1-13, 15, 16, 19, 21 and 22 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, the specification, and claims 1-3, 6-8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 19 and 21 have been amended and claims 14, 17, 18 and 20 have been cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Applicant appreciates the indication that claim 3 contains allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. For at least the reasons discussed below, Applicant submits that all pending claims are allowable.

The specification is objected to for incorporating by reference foreign patent applications. The specification has been amended to delete the incorporation by reference responsive to the objection. All "essential" subject matter already is present in the application. It is requested that the objection be withdrawn.

Claims 6-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph for being indefinite. Claim 6 has been amended to depend from claim 1, instead of claim 4, responsive to the rejection. It is requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1, 2, 14, 17, 19, 20 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,771,318 issued to Fang et al. (hereinafter "Fang"). The rejection of claims 14, 17 and 20 has been rendered moot by the cancellation of claims 14, 17 and 20. The rejection of the remaining claims is respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

With regard to claim 1, Applicant submits that Fang fails to disclose an image processing method comprising the combination of features recited in amended claim 1, wherein, inter alia, the similarity is judged by using characteristic differences among a plurality of pixels located on lines passing through the target pixel along specific directions, and

characteristic differences among a plurality of pixels located on lines passing near the target pixel along specific directions. For at least these reasons, Applicant submits that Fang fails to disclose all the features of amended claim 1.

With regard to claim 2, Applicant submits that Fang fails to disclose an image processing method comprising all the features recited in amended claim 2, including, inter alia, a direction-dependent low-pass filtering step of performing a weighted averaging operation in which weighted pixel values of pixels around a target pixel are added to a pixel value of said target pixel and a result of said addition is divided by a sum of the weights, a weighting rate along a direction manifesting marked similarity becoming increased based upon said judgment obtained in said similarity judging step, wherein ... in said direction-dependent low-pass filtering step, weighting rates for neighboring pixels located along four directions are determined in correspondence to said calculated second similarity values tt_2 , yy_2 , nu_2 and ns_2 , the pixel values of pixels around said target pixel are weighted by said weighting rates.

With regard to claims 19 and 21, Applicant submits that Fang fails to disclose the combination of features recited in claims amended 19 and 13, from which amended claim 21 depends, including, inter alia, a direction-dependent low-pass filtering step ... , wherein image data has values regarding a first color and values regarding a second color or a color difference between the second color and the first color, and weighting rates are obtained based upon the first color or luminance values in which a weighting to the first color is high, and weighted averaging is performed for the second color or the color difference using the weighting rates in the direction-dependent space low-pass filtering step. For at least these reasons, Applicant submits that Fang fails to disclose all the features of amended claims 13 and 19, as well as all the features of claim 21, which depends from claim 13.

It is requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 4-7 and 15-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Fang in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,253,046 issued to Shiraishi; claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Fang and Shiraishi, as applied to claim 6, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,040,858 issued to Ikeda; claims 9-11 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Fang and Ikeda; claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over the combination of Fang and Ikeda, as applied to claim 11, and further in view of Shiraishi; claim 22 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Fang and well known prior art. The rejections are respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

Applicant submits that none of Fang, Shiraishi and Ikeda, alone or in combination, disclose or suggest the following:

an image processing method comprising the combination of features recited in claim 1, wherein, inter alia, similarity is judged by using characteristic differences among a plurality of pixels located on lines passing through the target pixel along specific directions and characteristic differences among a plurality of pixels located on lines passing near the target pixel along specific directions; and

an image processing method comprising the combination of features recited in claim 13 including, inter alia, a direction-dependent low-pass filtering step ... wherein, image data has values regarding a first color and values regarding a second color or a color difference between the second color and the first color, and weighting rates are obtained based upon the first color or luminance values in which a weighting to the first color is high and weighted averaging is performed for the second color difference using the weighting rates in the direction-dependent low-pass filtering step.

For at least these reasons, Applicant submits that Fang, alone or in combination with Shiraishi and/or Ikeda, fails to disclose all the features of claims 4-12, which depend from

claim 1, as well as all the features of claims 15-16, 21 and 22, which depend from claim 13. It is requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

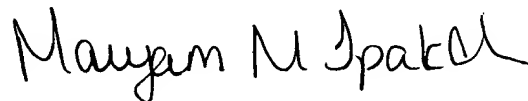
Claim 18 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Fang in view of well known prior art. The rejection is rendered moot by the cancellation of claim 18.

Applicant submits herewith an Information Disclosure Statement listing a reference (U.S. Patent No. 5,561,724) for the Examiner's consideration. It is requested that the Examiner consider the attached reference and return to Applicant's representative a signed and initialed Form PTO-1449 evidencing the consideration of the reference listed therein.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of all pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:MMI/ccs

Attachment:
Information Disclosure Statement

Date: April 20, 2004

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